



Fact Sheet

Sanitary Surveys of Drinking Water Systems

Information for purveyors

State regulations require periodic sanitary survey inspections

Sanitary surveys are periodic inspections of water system facilities, operations, and record keeping. The inspections identify conditions that may present a sanitary or public health risk.

Washington State regulations (WAC 246-290-416) call for a routine sanitary survey of all Group A public drinking water systems once every five years, except for community surface water systems, which are to be surveyed once every three years.

Sanitary surveys are conducted either by Department of Health (DOH) staff or by a DOH designee called a Third Party Qualified Sanitary Surveyor (QSS). Some Qualified Sanitary Surveyors are local health jurisdiction employees, while others are independent contractors.

After you receive word that a sanitary survey is required, the surveyor will contact you to make arrangements for conducting the survey. They will work cooperatively with you to meet individual scheduling needs to the extent possible. Water systems that do not schedule a survey will receive another notice with a required time frame for obtaining an inspection. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in increased monthly coliform monitoring to five samples per month, a red operating permit, state significant non-complier (SNC) status, and the possibility of civil penalties.

After the survey is done, the surveyor will provide you with a completed survey checklist and a summary report with findings. Please read the report carefully, as it describes any observed deficiencies found during the inspection. It is your responsibility to correct these deficiencies promptly. A copy of the survey results will also go to the appropriate DOH regional office for review. DOH will notify you in writing if any follow-up action is required.

Minimum components of all routine sanitary surveys:

Discussion/Review	Inspection
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water facilities inventory (WFI) record and operating permit status• Distribution system plans and maps• Routine operation and maintenance records• Coliform monitoring history and plan• Source water quality monitoring history and waiver status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Source and sanitary control area (protection, components, condition)• Treatment equipment and procedures, if any• Pumps/pump facilities and controls• Finished water storage• Distribution system

Additional components that might be included:

- Status of other management documents such as Small Water System Management Program Guide, operations and maintenance program, and water supply security measures
- Status of cross connection control program and test histories of any backflow prevention assemblies
- Operator certification status



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

The sanitary survey inspection process

1. DOH or an appointed designee informs you when you need to have a sanitary survey.
2. You and the surveyor agree on a survey date.
3. You arrange for system personnel to be available on the survey date so they can share system records and show the surveyor around the system.
4. You prepare for the inspection by gathering, reviewing, and organizing records (WFIs, water quality results, etc.) so you can share them with the surveyor.
5. System personnel meet with the surveyor, discuss records, and show the surveyor around the system (tour of the system facilities, pump house, storage, booster pumps, treatment unit, etc.).
6. The surveyor sends you a follow-up letter regarding the survey results. A copy of the results also goes to the appropriate DOH regional office for review.
7. DOH notifies you in writing if any follow-up action is required and sends a bill for the survey (if not already paid as part of a local health jurisdiction survey application).
8. You complete any necessary corrections identified in the survey report and DOH follow-up letter and then notify DOH in writing when any of the corrections are completed or to ask for an extension to complete the work.
9. DOH tracks any critical deficiencies of high public health risk until they are corrected. It is expected that the water system will complete all corrections identified by the next survey cycle.
10. You keep a copy of the survey results and DOH letter for your records.

The checklist below may help you track important events and tasks during the process.

Check when done	Task/Event	Date
<input type="checkbox"/>	System contacted and survey scheduled	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrangements made for system staff to be available on day of survey	
<input type="checkbox"/>	System records organized and available	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Final preparation for survey completed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Survey conducted	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Survey follow-up letter received and filed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Needed corrections scheduled for completion (if applicable)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Any additional follow-up correspondence filed	

Fees

Sanitary survey fees are collected either by your local health jurisdiction or DOH. If DOH collects the fee, you will get a bill with your final inspection report. If the local health jurisdiction collects the fee, it is payable either at the time you apply to schedule a survey or when you get your final inspection report.

More information

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